SE News; Domestic

HD **Strong Winds Fuel New Wildfires In Southern California; Trump Brushes Off January 6 Rioters Beating Cops: Minor Incidents; Trump Curtails Protections Around Diversity, LGBTQ Rights; Trump Grants Temporary Security Clearances To Officials Who Have Not Been Fully Vetted; Trump Threatens Putin With Taxes, Tariffs And Sanctions Over Ukraine War; Strong Winds Fuel New Wildfire Near Los Angeles; Funerals Held for Victims of Deadly Fire at Ski Resort; White House Threatens Sanctuary Cities; Same-Sex Marriage Law Takes Effect, Hundreds Tie the Knot; Bouncing Back from the Brink of Extinction; Bytedance Board Member: Deal in the Works to Save TikTok; Prince Harry Settles Legal Claims against Tabloid Publisher. Aired 1-2a ET**

BY John Vause, Veronica Miracle, Rene Marsh, Juliette Kayyem, Matthew Chance, Chad Myers, Jomana Karadsheh, Priscilla Alvarez, Marc Stewart, Mike Valerio, Lynda Kinkade, Max Foster

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LP

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[01:00:24]

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JOHN VAUSE, CNN ANCHOR: A new fire emergency in southern Calif. Hello, I'm John Vause. Ahead here on CNN Newsroom.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's not over yet. We still have a couple of days to go.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VAUSE: Thousands of residents forced to evacuate with the Hughes Fire, driven by strong gusty winds, burning a football field sized area every few seconds.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, U.S. PRESIDENT: They were very minor incidents.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VAUSE: The relentless and never ending efforts by Donald Trump to turn attacks by January 6th insurrectionists into peaceful protesting patriots. And this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNDIENTIFIED MALE: News UK have admitted that The Sun has indeed engaged in illegal practices.

(END VIDEO CLIP) VAUSE: Prince Harry gets a rare unequivocal apology from the Murdoch Press along with a multimillion dollar payout, all part of a settlement to end his long running lawsuit.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Live from Atlanta. This is CNN Newsroom with John Vause.

VAUSE: Firefighters in Southern California once again trying to contain a huge blaze which erupted Wednesday morning in the northern foothills and mountains of Los Angeles County.

The Hughes Fire has spread quickly, mostly because of strong gusty winds, burning an area equivalent to a football field every two to three seconds. At last report, the fire was zero percent contained. So far, no lives have been lost, no structures destroyed, but more than 50,000 people are under evacuation orders and warnings.

The flames have scorched more than 9,000 acres or almost 4,000 hectares, and temporarily shut down part of the Interstate 5 freeway, the main north south artery in California. This all comes about two weeks after deadly wildfires first swept through the bone dry region, destroying billions of dollars worth of property and killing more than two dozen people.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHIEF JOE TYLER, CAL FIRE DIRECTOR: We have been impacted significantly over the last two weeks, as we all know, related to the Palisades Fire, the Eaton Fire, the Hearst Fire, the Lydia Fire. And as we continue through these weather conditions, we recognize that it's not over yet. We recognize that we still have a couple of days to go.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VAUSE" CNN's Veronica Miracle has been covering the threat to the community state in California.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

VERONICA MIRACLE, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Right now, 31,000 people are currently under mandatory evacuation orders. We are just 45 minutes away from the last deadly and destruct fire that burned in Los Angeles just a few days ago, the Eaton Fire. This is the Hughes Fire that you're looking at and you can see the flames roaring behind us over that hillside.

Luckily, the fire is burning right now in an area that is desolate. It's just shrubs and a lot of plants, and it's not moving toward residences. But there is, of course, major concern that winds could shift. Winds could pick up and blow embers in the direction of houses, of businesses. There's also an RV park just right over the hill there.

So, firefighters have descended upon this community coming from the Eaton fire and the Palisades fire moving over here. About 4,000 of them are working to make sure that they can contain this overnight and take advantage of cooler temperatures and lower winds. Veronica Miracle, CNN, Castaic, California.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VAUSE: Joining us out from Santa Clarita in California at the Hughes Fire Incident Command Post is Frederick Fielding, a firefighter specialist with the L.A .County Fire Department. Thank you for being with us.

FREDERICK FIELDING, FIREFIGHTER SPECIALIST, L.A. COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT: Yes, thank you for having me.

VAUSE" So we'll start with the latest numbers. How much has actually burned and how much is contained at this point.

FIELDING: So the latest numbers are 10,176 acres. We have 14 percent containment.

VAUSE: That seems to be a lot of progress in a very short period of time.

FIELDING: Yes, we were able to bring a lot of resources. Some of the resources that were being released from the other fires in the area were able to come here and back us up almost immediately. So within a few hours rather than a few days. And that has made a huge impact here. It's allowed us to really get a good start at handling this fire.

VAUSE: Can you make a prediction on the timeline here when we might see more progress in containment?

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FIELDING: Well, there's always going to be more progress because we're putting in really good work here. But the containment numbers are relative and really Mother Nature is the driving force behind that. And what we're doing is basically just keeping this as contained as possible. But a lot of that is dependent on Mother Nature.

[01:05:00]

So when she takes a break, that's when we go to work and really get in there and make progress. When she picks back up, that's when we take a defensive posture and make sure that no lives or homes are destroyed with this fire.

VAUSE: Yes, as of this hour, no one has been killed, no building destroyed. But how close are the flames to major residential areas?

FIELDING: Yes, I mean, the flames got within a few hundred yards of some of the residences here, but firefighters were right there to make sure that they made those stops integral positions and they've done great work.

The folks on the line, the folks in the air, all the support personnel are really working well together to make sure we get this fire out as soon as possible.

VAUSE: We had more than 50,000 people under this evacuation orders as well as warnings. Are those numbers expected to change either way in the coming hours?

FIELDING: Well, it's all dependent on where this fire goes. If the winds pick up, we may need to adjust those and increase them up. If the winds die down and we can keep making progress, then at that point, those orders may come down a little bit. I'm sorry, the warnings may come down.

The orders right now are for the most highly impacted areas. Those probably won't change significantly because those are the areas closest to the fire and the areas where we need to get in there and work. But some of those warnings may come down, but it's very dependent on the weather.

So they're constantly reevaluating where we need to have those evacuations, where we need to have those warnings so that we don't inconvenience people. But first and foremost, we want to keep people safe.

VAUSE: One thing which seems pretty unique about this fire is the speed at which it's moving and burning territory with a football field every couple of seconds. Is there anything else about this fire which is unique in what has already been a very unique fire season, which isn't really a fire season, but it's now.

FIELDING: Yes, I think the state of the vegetation is really the story here combined with kind of normal winds. So these Santa Anas would be normal in a year where we're getting normal precipitation. I know at the start of the Eaton and Palisades Fire, we should have had roughly 4 and half inches of rain, but we had 0.2 inches of rain. That's less than 5 percent of the normal precipitation for that year.

So when you've got those really dry fuels and then you add those normal Santa Ana winds, you know, this is a -- this isn't as strong as the winds were for the Eaton and Palisade Fire. But these are pretty normal, significant Santa Ana winds. But in combination with that very dry vegetation, it's a recipe for very fast fire.

VAUSE: One other thing which also stands out is how quickly, you know, you started making progress on containment of this fire compared to what was happening two weeks ago. There were a lot of factors because of that. But were you better prepared this time? Were things done differently this time around?

FIELDING: Well, we've always been prepared. But one of the sort of happy accidents is that some of the people who are being released from both the Eaton and Palisades fire were able to get here and back us up very quickly. Some of the local fire departments and law enforcement, they were able to be backed up by a lot of those resources who were getting released off those other fires. So they could be here very quickly. We had some extra air resources available at our disposal that we could use to make sure we get this fire contained as quickly as possible.

Plus, I think the risk calculus has sort of changed. You know, the damage from the Eaton and Palisades fires was so great that they're not taking any chances. They're sending all these resources. We've got them here. We're going to use them.

VAUSE: Frederick Fielding there. Thank you very much, sir. We appreciate the update. Good luck. Stay safe.

FIELDING: Yes, thank you. Good night.

VAUSE: Well, it seems sweeping pardons and commutations for January six rioters may have just been the beginning. The Trump administration now talking about hosting at least some of the newly freed insurrectionists or peaceful protesters at a reception at the White House. Sources say no visit has been scheduled, and it's unclear who might actually get the invite.

Oath Keepers leader Stewart Rhodes visited lawmakers on Capitol Hill Wednesday after he was released. He was serving 18 years in prison for leading the plot and planning it to keep Trump in power. Rhodes says he regrets saying he wanted to hang then House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Meanwhile, President Trump defended his controversial pardons and commutations during a Fox News interview, saying the violence against police very minor.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: They were in there for three and a half years, a long time, and in many, solitary confinement, treated like nobody's ever been treated so badly. They were treated like the worst criminals in history. And you know what they were there for? They were protesting the vote because they knew the election was rigged and they were protesting the vote.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VAUSE: Well, next up on the to do list for the Trump administration is taking aim at diversity, equity and inclusion programs, as well as protections for federal workers. It's urging employees to report any efforts to conceal DEI initiatives by changing job descriptions or using coded language. CNN's Rene Marsh has our story.

[01:10:05]

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

TRUMP: Our country is going to be based on merit again.

RENE MARSH, CNN U.S. NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): All employees of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, or DEI offices at federal agencies have been put on administrative leave. The Trump administration also cutting DEI initiatives, training offices and taking down social media and websites focused on DEI. And the changes are coming quickly.

This was the Treasury website on its commitment to DEI before Trump was sworn in. Here it is now the same at the Labor Department. The administration also set an end of the month deadline for a plan to execute a reduction in force for these employees. In layman's terms, a plan for firings.

MARSH: How many federal workers are we talking about here that could be impacted by this?

JAMES COMER, U.S. HOUSE REPUBLICAN: We have no idea. And one of the things that we hope to learn this week is exactly how many employees are working in DEI.

MARSH (voice-over): Republican Chairman of the House Oversight Committee James Comer is an ally on Trump's mission to eliminate DEI. He says he'll work to pass laws in Congress that make Trump's executive orders permanent.

COMER: It amounts to hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions of dollars in added payroll.

MARSH (voice-over): The impact will go beyond government cutting equity related grants and contracts and ending DEI requirements for government contractors, all coming within the next 60 days.

EVERETT KELLEY, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES: People are taken to tears because they don't know what to expect. You know, it's a smoke stream to really just fire a whole bunch of civil service.

MARSH (voice-over): Trump's order could also impact government initiatives at agencies like Health and Human Services that use DEI funds to increase the diversity of patients in cancer clinical trials, vaccine equity in rural communities, and research that promotes maternal health equity.

COMER: We are going to abolish these DEI agencies and we feel it's a duplicative service, repetitive service. It's already illegal to discriminate.

MARSH: If the protections aren't there, doesn't it make it easier to violate a law?

COMER: I think the protections are there.

MARSH (voice-over): Right now agencies are not required to track DEI expenditures, so it's unclear how much the government has spent overall. CNN analyzed the proposed budgets of 20 federal agencies. HHS, for example, requested 113 million in its budget for training for diversity in the health workforce. And the Department of Defense asked for 50 million to fund DEI related activities. That amount accounts for just .006 percent of the department's total budget requests, according to a spokesperson.

The Biden administration expanded DEI protections to a broader group of Americans, including women, rural communities, military spouses and caregivers.

KATY YOUKER, LAWYERS' COMMNITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS UNDER LAW: What diversity, equity and inclusion programs do is open opportunities to qualified, deserving people who worked hard. It's not about dictating hiring decisions or filling quotas.

MARSH (voice-over): Federal workers at multiple agencies received department wide memos Wednesday urging them to report efforts to conceal work on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within government agencies, warning that the failure to report this information will result in, quote, adverse consequences.

Now, CNN first reported last week that federal employees were quietly editing job descriptions to protect roles over fears about scrutiny and cuts by the Trump administration. And because the anti-DEI effort currently underway also targets government grants and policies, the impact will be felt in communities far beyond Washington, D.C. Rene Marsh, CNN, Washington.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VAUSE: And the president is breaking with normal security clearances for incoming White House staff. They'll be granted temporary six month security clearances even though they've not been vetted for access to highly classified material.

President Trump is blaming a backlog of background checks caused by the Biden administration. National security lawyers inside and outside the government call the move unusual, if not unprecedented. Juliette Kayyem is a CNN senior national security analyst. She served as the former assistant secretary for homeland Security and is currently a professor at Harvard University. And it's been a while and it's good to see you.

JULIETTE KAYYEM, CNN SENIOR NATIONAL SECURITY ANALYST: Nice to see you.

VAUSE: OK. So for most people, a government security or background check, it makes root canal seem like a fun day out. And usually a new administration may experience some frustration if a candidate is disqualified because a problem is found. And that's the point. The system's not out to get anyone. It has a purpose and it's preventative.

So why would Donald Trump want to open up his administration and the entire country to some kind of potential security issue?

KAYYEM: Well, I mean, mostly because Donald Trump has never had confidence in this classified information security world that I live in that most people who are in the security realm live in.

[01:15:05]

I mean, we certainly know that he has shared information with allies and potentially foreign enemies. He had the classified information case coming out of Mar-a-Lago, which was a certain amount of carelessness.

Look, these delays are typical in any administration as it's coming in, and the system has sort of remedied for it, that you can have preliminary security clearances, you can have expedited security clearances, you can begin a background check and be given a certain status of classified information access.

So it maybe it's not top secret, but it's secret until that review happens. Because the review is not simply, you know, is this person trustworthy? They might be. It's whether this person might be susceptible to either spies, foreign money, something that when they're in government, they might prove to be a risk.

VAUSE: Now, under the Trump security protocol, the incoming members of the new administration will be immediately granted interim top secret, sensitive compartmented information TS/SCI, security clearances for a period not to exceed six months. These individuals shall be immediately granted access to the facilities and technology necessary to perform the duties of the office to which they've been hired.

In other words, they get the keys to the kingdom for six months.

KAYYEM: Yes. I mean, and it appears, at least what we know now, that they don't have to go through any preliminary background check. So, like, in other words, even just like, filling anything out, they show up first day of work, and they're given access to the TS/SCI.

Remember, the SCI also includes access to STIF, which is an SCI facility, which is where you go into a room and you're essentially given the information and that information. This isn't just like, oh, we have secrets and we want to keep our secrets. This is sources and methods and information.

I mean, in other words, the secret is things that you actually might read in the newspaper, because lots of people talk about secret information. Top secret is we have a guy in this terrorist cell who's giving us information.

That's the kind of thing that very few people know because very few people need to know it and that the release of it would cause harm. We don't know who these people are who are being given this TS/SCI that presumably the FBI doesn't know who they are, and there is simply no background.

I mean, it appears to be no requirement that they do anything. It's relatively easy to say, I'm $100,000 in debt, or I'm $10,000 in debt, that those are differences that matter for purposes of your vulnerability to foreign intelligence or agency or a foreign government.

VAUSE: And to that point, CNN is reporting that several incoming Trump officials have never had access to classified information before and as such, typically would not be granted interim clearance without at least a review of government form documenting personal information and some other basic information. That's exactly what you're saying.

In other words, there is a greater level of security required to get on a commercial airline than there is to gain top secret classified information at the Trump White House.

KAYYEM: That's exactly, that's a great point. It is -- that's absolutely true. It's true. Which is you have to give up a certain amount of your basic information to make sure that the person entering the airplane is the same as the person who says that they're entering the airplane.

This appears to be, you know, Jim Smith, who was the deputy campaign chair in Iowa, who's never had been in government, let alone had access to classified information, is now going to know the sources and methods of covert operations in other countries.

This may be what people voted for, for Trump, but that doesn't mean that we can't -- one can't criticize it for its potential vulnerabilities. I know the Senate GOP say, well, you know, we don't really care. It doesn't matter. This is Trump. He gets to do what he wants. He won. That is true.

But we also -- it is important to lay out how different this is under these standards. I believe, and I don't know if we know his status, that Elon Musk probably has or will be granted that kind of security clearance. And one can just decide on their own whether they think this is a person who can be trusted with the kinds of information that he will now have access to.

VAUSE: Yes, there's a lot in this. I guess this is -- will be ongoing a while yet. Juliette, good to see you. Thank you for being with us.

KAYYEM: Thank you.

VAUSE: When we come back. After failing to make good on his promise to end the war in Ukraine on day one of his second term, Donald Trump is now ramping up the pressure on Russia to enter into peace talks.

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[01:20:06]

Also ahead, the U.N. Secretary General spells out what he calls a win- win situation after the ceasefire in Gaza.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

VAUSE: After his inauguration, U.S. President Donald Trump talked about meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin to have a peace deal in place with Ukraine, quote as quickly as possible. Now says he might use tariffs and sanctions to push Moscow to the negotiating table. CNN's Matthew Chance has details.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

MATTHEW CHANCE, CNN CHIEF GLOBAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT: Well, President Trump is essentially telling Vladimir Putin to reach a Ukraine deal soon or face increased sanctions. We can do this the easy way or the hard way, Trump posted on his Truth Social platform, warning that if what he called this ridiculous war does not end, then he'd have no other choice but to put taxes, tariffs and sanctions on anything being sold by Russia to the United States.

Problem is, Russia is of course, already one of the world's most sanctioned countries, and it's unclear what further measures would make any significant. I think in his social media post is Trump very Trump's very public offer wrapped in a backhanded insult that he would broker a peace deal. Quote, I would do Russia, whose economy is failing, and President Putin a big favor, Trump posted.

It's true that Russia's war economy is under enormous strain and that public support for what Putin calls his special military operation is questionable. But it's also likely that the Kremlin would see any ceasefire as a valuable opportunity to lock in territorial gains in Ukraine, build its battered military. For Putin, that would be a very big favor indeed. Matthew Chance, CNN, Moscow.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VAUSE: White House (INAUDIBLE) envoy Steve Witkoff will head to Gaza soon to ensure both Israel and Hamas are sticking to their ceasefire agreements. Witkoff will join a group of monitors at the Philadelphi and Netzerim corridors. The Philadelphi Corridor is that strip of land along the Gaza Egypt border that had been a point of contention during ceasefire talks. And Netzerim is a buffer zone established by the Israeli military bisecting the Gaza Strip.

The first phase of the ceasefire deal is expected to take six weeks. Negotiations on the second and third phase are expected to begin. U.N. Secretary General says the situation can now go two ways.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ANTONIO GUTERRES, U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL: The next phase is leading to a situation of permanent ceasefire in Gaza and a situation in which a transition can be established in Gaza, allowing for the reunification of the occupied Palestinian territories and allowing for a serious negotiation of a political solution based on the two states.

This is the win-win situation. But there is another possibility.

[01:25:00]

And the other possibility is for Israel feeling emboldened by the military successes that it has had, to think that this is the moment to do the annexation of the West Bank and to keep the Gaza in a kind of a limbo situation with an unclear and clear form of governance. It is clear for me that Israel is not fundamentally interested in Gaza, its fundamentally interested in the West Bank.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VAUSE: While a fragile ceasefire in Gaza enters day five, Israel continues to push ahead with a military operation in the West Bank. Israel's defense minister says the military is using lessons from the Gaza war as they advance on the Jenin refugee camp.

Israel Katz says Operation Iron Wall will eliminate terrorists and ensure terrorism does not return. At least 10 Palestinians have been killed so far, more than 40 wounded, according to the U.N. agency UNWRA. The

director of the Jenin Hospital says the building is under complete siege by the Israeli military and ambulances are not being allowed access.

President Trump upped the U.S. classification for Yemen's Iran backed Houthi rebels on Wednesday. They're once again designated a foreign terrorist organization.

Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, one of the world's most important maritime trade routes for some of the world's biggest shipping companies to suspend transit along that route.

Also Wednesday, the Houthis released 25 crew members of a cargo ship after more than a year in captivity. The U.N. says their release is a step in the right direction.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

FARHAN HAQ, UNITED NATIONS SPOKESPERSON: We welcome the Release of the 25 member crew of the Galaxy Leader cargo ship that was taken hostage in November 2023 while transiting the Red Sea. In a statement, Hans Grunberg, our special envoy for Yemen, said that this is a step in the right direction. He urged Ansar Allah to continue these positive steps on all fronts, including ending all maritime attacks.

These measures are critical in improving the space for mediation, he added, which in the long term will facilitate the resumption of the Yemeni political process that millions of Yemenis have been yearning for.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VAUSE: When we come back, U.S. troops heading for the border with Mexico, immigration officials rounding up potential deportees. Let the U.S. immigration crackdown begin.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[01:29:43]

VAUSE: Welcome back everyone. I'm John Vause. You're watching CNN NEWSROOM.

The latest now on the new wildfire burning in southern California. Since erupting Wednesday morning, the huge fire has left more than 10,000 acres, that's more than 4,000 hectares, charred and blackened. The fire is now 14 percent contained.

31,000 people under evacuation orders, another 23,000 under evacuation warnings. Officials are now warning that the gusty winds driving the huge fire -- huge fire will peak overnight.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHIEF ANTHONY MARRONE, LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT: The weather is what's predominantly driving this fire And its spread right now. The National Weather Service has extended the red flag warning through 10:00 a.m. on Friday for most of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

Light to moderate Santa Ana winds will continue tonight and into Thursday. A situation -- the situation remains dynamic and the fire remains a difficult fire to contain although we are getting the upper hand.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VAUSE: CNN meteorologist Chad Myers has details now on the conditions fueling this latest outbreak.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

CHAD MYERS, AMS METEOROLOGIST: Well, it was certainly a windy day on Wednesday. Wind gusts 35 to 40 miles per hour right in the fire zone.

Kind of give you some perspective here. Palisades fire, Eaton fire go up the 405 to the 5 and go past Santa Clarita. And you get to here, Castaic Lake.

And most of the fire today was in the forested land, in the recreational area, and the fight was to keep it away from the interstate and keep it away from the people and where they live.

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So look at here. Look at the Santa Clarita area for now. Temperatures are still very cool. Winds are so far so good. But for the afternoon later on today and into tonight, things are going to get breezy again.

In fact, I certainly don't like that number. Santa Clarita and just north of there is where the fire is 41 miles per hour.

So not only was it a windy day today, but it was a dry day. The relative humidity today was 7 percent. It hasn't rained one-tenth of an inch in Los Angeles for 259 consecutive days.

Now we will get some rain on Saturday and Sunday. We hope it's not too heavy because you don't want flash flooding, but we'll take the rainfall when we can get it because we should have had about 5 and a half inches of rainfall so far this wet season. This water year, we call it the wet season.

5 and a half inches is deficit. We've only had 3/100 of an inch of rain, and we are certainly in severe drought.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VAUSE: Funeral services have been held in Turkey for some of the 79 people killed in a fire, which swept through a popular ski resort. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attended one funeral and helped carry the coffin.

More now from CNN's Jomana Karadsheh.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

JOMANA KARADSHEH, CNN CORRESPONDENT: The names and pictures of the victims of Tuesday's devastating fire are emerging on social media and across Turkish media. Among them families with young children who perished in this tragedy.

One family, according to our affiliate CNN Turk, lost 14 members, including a mother, a father and their three young children and nine other relatives.

This happened during the winter school break in Turkey when many families from Istanbul and Ankara and other cities would usually take their children on holiday to resorts like Kartalkaya, one of the most popular resorts in the Bolu mountains in northwestern Turkey.

You know, there were more than 230 guests and staff members at this hotel, the Grand Kartal according to officials when the fire broke out at around 3:30 a.m. on Tuesday. And as you would expect, this is a time when most would have been asleep.

The fire engulfed the 12-story hotel and we have seen the shocking images and heard the terrifying testimony from survivors, people trapped in the hotel tried desperately to escape the flames. Some tied bedsheets together and threw them out of the window, trying to climb out.

Others jumped out of the window. At least two people, according to officials, died after jumping.

Some eyewitnesses say that they couldn't find fire extinguishers. Others have said that the fire detection system failed. The government immediately launched an investigation and several people, including the business owner, have been detained.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Bolu on Wednesday and attended funerals there during this day of national mourning.

And as the nation mourns, they are waiting for answers. How did this happen? And was this tragedy avoidable?

Jomana Karadsheh, CNN -- London.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VAUSE: 1,500 U.S. Troops have been ordered to the southern border with Mexico. Thousands more will follow in the coming months.

The first wave of deployments comes just days after Donald Trump declared a national emergency at the border. Still not clear if the troops will be armed. No active-duty U.S. troops are allowed to enforce domestic

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laws without express authorization, but that could still change, with the president saying he is yet to decide on whether or not to give that authorization.

[01:34:51]

VAUSE: Meantime, Trump's so-called border czar says immigration officials have already arrested hundreds of immigrants, who he calls serious criminals. Tom Homan says that anyone in the country illegally is fair game for arrest, whether they've committed violent crimes or not. And he's threatening sanctuary cities as well.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TOM HOMAN, TRUMP'S BORDER CZAR: Here's what's going to happen.

We'll find a bad guy, but when we find him, he's going to be with others. Others that may not be a criminal priority, but guess what? If they're in the United States illegally, they're going to be arrested too.

So sanctuary cities will get exactly what they don't want. More agents in the communities, more people arrested, more collaterals arrested.

So that's a game they want to play, game on.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VAUSE: CNN's Priscilla Alvarez has the latest now on Trump's plan for the U.S.-Mexico border.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

PRISCILLA ALVAREZ, CNN CORRESPONDENT: The Trump administration is deploying additional active-duty troops to the U.S. southern border in a show of force. The Pentagon saying that they will send 1,500 additional troops to assist border authorities along the U.S.-Mexico border. That's in addition to the 2,200 active-duty troops who are already stationed there.

Now, some of their work is going to include, for example, operational readiness, assisting in command-and-control, as well as intelligence gathering when they are assessing threats or the flow of migrants. It also includes helping and augmenting with air operations.

Now, in addition to all of this, the military also lending its aircraft for repatriation flights. That means sending migrants back home.

Now they are targeting the population that is currently in border patrol custody. That is, those who have recently crossed the U.S.- Mexico border, around 5,000 of them.

They are sending the aircraft to San Diego and El Paso, according to the Pentagon, which also says operations will start in the next 24 to 48 hours.

All of this as the U.S.-Mexico border has been relatively quiet in recent months. But the Trump administration is trying to crack down and double down on their efforts to keep migrants from coming to the United States.

Priscilla Alvarez, CNN -- Washington.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VAUSE: And the head of the World Trade Organization says everyone should keep calm over potential Trump tariffs and just take a big breath.

And she spoke with CNN's Richard Quest at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

RICHARD QUEST, CNN HOST: Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the director-general of the World Trade Organization and is with me now.

Are you going to get over it?

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NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA, DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION: Well, this is what I say. I say, Richard, we should all chill. Can we chill?

I think we shouldn't get overexcited about the issue of tariffs. Let's wait and see what actually is done.

right now, There's a lot of speculation on what might be done. It hasn't been done yet, Richard.

QUEST: I get that.

OKONJO-IWEALA: Yes.

QUEST: I get that. But you've got the president saying day after day, 10 percent here, 25 percent there.

OKONJO-IWEALA: Well, so let's wait? When we look at what has actually been said on the executive order, it asked for a series of studies on different trade agreements, even the external revenue service is to be studied to see how it can be set up.

So I'm just saying, could we take a deep breath? Let's chill, to our members. Let's not overreact. Let's not think of tit for tat. Let's not get too excited.

QUEST: But you have to -- but as the Europeans have said, you have to be prepared for tit for tat.

OKONJO-IWEALA: No, you have to be prepared to take what good steps first, through the WTO and the European Union is actually doing that with China on the dispute they have.

And what is encouraging right now, and I'm not trying to minimize the issue, I'll come back to the impact of tariffs. But saying we should study the matter is actually what the WTO recommends.

If you feel that you're being harmed by other members actions, before you take any action, do the studies show the impact of the harm. And then from there you can initiate consultations and talk to that member to see how you resolve the issue.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VAUSE: And CNN's Marc Stewart has more on possible tit for tat tariffs from Beijing.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

MARC STEWART, CNN CORRESPONDENT: The Trump tariff threat is something that has been looming over Beijing for months.

If we look at past history, China has taken on a tit for tat approach. You do something to hurt us, we'll do something to hurt you back.

During its daily press briefing, China was diplomatic but did not rule anything out.

MAO NING, CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER SPOKESPERSON (through translator): We always believe that there is no winner in a trade war or tariff war. China will always firmly safeguard its national interests.

STEWART: If you look back to 2019, during the first Trump administration, China retaliated after the U.S. imposed tariffs, part of a trade war between the world's two largest economies.

China has been long aware of potential tariffs and has taken action. In recent years, it's expanded its focus beyond the U.S., exporting more goods to Southeast Asia, Europe, Africa, Latin America and Russia.

[01:39:52]

STEWART: The prospect of more tariffs may be concerning to investors as stocks in China and Hong Kong saw a dip.

Marc Stewart, CNN -- Beijing.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

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VAUSE: Hundreds of same sex couples are getting married across Thailand as the country becomes the first Southeast Asian country to recognize marriage equality with full legal, financial and other rights.

The landmark bill was passed by Thailand's parliament and endorsed by the king last year.

CNN's Mike Valerio has details.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

MIKE VALERIO, CNN CORRESPONDENT: For myriad LGBTQ couples, this is a bright spot and a moment of hope in Asia, where Thailand finds itself in very rare company.

So let's show you what's been happening throughout the day. There are whole multitudes of LGBTQ couples that are getting married one by one in Bangkok in these huge ceremonies. Officials checking their paperwork one by one on this historic day.

Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the prime minister of Thailand, putting this into context, saying earlier in the morning, quote, "More than two decades of fighting to pass the marriage equality law and two decades of confronting prejudice and societal values have finally brought us to this day."

Earlier in the morning, we met American Alexander Avramenko and Thai partner, Chien-Shiung Wang (ph). They've been together for 16 years, met in Thailand, and they explained to us what exactly this means to them and the wider region.

Listen to what Alexander told us.

ALEXANDER AVRAMENKO, MARRIED PARTNER IN BANGKOK: It's a good example for another Asian countries, and I think many, many Southeastern countries will follow the example of Thailand and make people life more happier, more -- give them the more opportunity in their life.

VALERIO: So what you heard from Alexander underscores two points. First of all, the map. Thailand joins only two other places in Asia -- Nepal and Taiwan that have extended legalized same sex marriage to couples that live within their jurisdictions.

And it seems as though the conservative politics of the region, of this continent seems as though this is going to be the last place for a long time to extend these rights.

When we look at where we are in South Korea, Japan, China, Indonesia -- strands of social conservatism certainly rule the day and are precluding couples from enjoying these similar rights.

For its part, Thailand is already planning on cashing in on this latest development, marketing itself as a super-friendly destination for LGBTQ couples, more so than Thailand already is.

Mike Valerio, CNN -- Seoul.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VAUSE: We'll take a short break. When we come back, how a critter that looks like a tiny kangaroo bouncing back from the brink of extinction and helping to revitalize Australian landscape.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[01:49:55]

VAUSE: In Australia, the brush-tailed bettong is seen as nature's gardener, with digging habits playing a vital role in the ecosystem. Resembling a tiny kangaroo or rat, they once inhabited 60 percent of the mainland, but today are found in small protected areas.

Today, on "Call to Earth", we visit south Australia, where a project to reintroduce the critically-endangered critter to its ancestral homeland is showing promising returns. (BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

LYNDA KINKADE, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Guuranda is an ancient place. Now known as the Yorke Peninsula, South Australia.

New research has recently revealed that its traditional custodians, the. Narungga people have lived on this land for at least 8,000 years nurturing its fragile wilderness, its soul.

GARRY GOLDSMITH, BUSINESS MANAGER, NARUNGGA, NATION ABORIGINAL CORPORATION: The best practice has been here for millennia. And I think that's been ignored for way too long.

KINKADE: Garry Goldsmith is of Narungga descent and works with the Marna Bangarra Project which aims to protect the health of the region's natural systems.

GOLDSMITH: It was really important to me to be involved about how I could really influence the traditional cultural knowledge. And that's part of our role as traditional owners, as custodians is to ensure that there is longevity

KINKADE: In collaboration with the WWF Australia, this ambitious plan involves reintroducing some of the native species, gone as a result of habitat loss and the introduction of feral animals during European colonization.

DEREK SANDOW, MARNA BANGGARA PROJECT MANAGER, NORTHERN AND YORKE LANDSCAPE BOARD: Foxes, Cats, the loss of habitat -- it's just combined together to create a really tough world for them, and they haven't been able to survive.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Wow. We met your friends today, mate.

KINKADE: Many people will know Rambo here as a brush-tailed bettong, its common name. The small and bouncy marsupials are ecosystem engineers, promoting plant growth by aerating soil and spreading seeds as they forage for food.

To the Narungga, Rambo is known as a Yowie (ph), and while his kind disappeared from this part of south Australia, the species has survived in a pocket of the continent's west, the home of the Nyungar people, who call these animals by another name, the woylie.

In 2021, the first group of woylies were brought from western Australia to repopulate the Yorke Peninsula.

GOLDSMITH: The Woylie and Yowie Translocation Project shows that cultural groups are still working together to ensure that each nation is being cared for as if it was your own.

KINKADE: It's now up to this team of ecologists to make sure they're thriving in the new environment that was once their own.

SANDOW: We've now got to a stage where the habitat is here for Yowie. We've reduced fox and cat impacts to a level that's low enough for these Yowie to be reintroduced, and for them to actually find refuges, find food, and to survive themselves with low numbers of foxes and cats.

KINKADE: Caring for the new arrivals means yearly checkups. So just before sunset, the team sets humane traps for the nocturnal marsupial in the hope that early the next morning, data collected from the wild population will prove that the rewilding plan continues to work.

Daybreak and its discoveries fuel more hope. The first Yowie or bettong, is a young male born right here.

SANDOW: Which is fantastic for the project. That's what we want to see.

KINKADE: The young bettong is tagged and microchipped before his measurements show he's quite healthy in this new home.

SANDOW: So they've got a what we call a prehensile tail. So that means they can actually grab things with their tail and sort of use it as a limb.

KINKADE: One by one, they are tested and released, joining the now growing population of Yowie/Woylie/bettong a trio of names for one unique and vitally important critter. Back on the Yorke Peninsula Guuranda where they belong.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

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VAUSE: To learn more about the bettong's comeback, check out the article and photo gallery at CNN.com/CalltoEarth.

We'll be back in just a moment.

[01:49:21]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

VAUSE: U.S. President Donald Trump spoke with Saudi Prince -- Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman by phone Wednesday in what is his first known conversation with a foreign leader since taking office.

And according to Saudi officials, they discussed the conflicts in the Middle East as well as Saudi plans to increase investment and trade with the U.S. by $600 billion over the next four years.

The Kingdom was the first international trip by President Trump in his first term, and he says he may do it again, especially if the Saudis make good on the promised investments.

A board member at TikTok's parent company says the deal to save the app from disappearing in the U.S. will be done soon, maybe as early as next -- at the end of the week.

That's welcome news for the 170 million users in the U.S., where the social media platform faces a ban in the coming months if it's not sold by its Chinese parent company, Bytedance. The board member, General Atlantic CEO Bill Ford, says it's in everyone's interest to keep the Chinese app available in the United States. And it comes as President Donald Trump angles to broker a deal.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I've met with owners of TikTok, the big owners. It's worthless if it doesn't get a permit. It's not like, oh, you can take the U.S. The whole thing is worthless.

With a permit, it's worth like $1 trillion. So what I'm thinking about saying to somebody is buy it and give half to the United States of America -- half, and we'll give you the permit.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

VAUSE: Experts say President Trump's executive order delaying the ban on TikTok has deepened a murky legal landscape, with the president choosing not to enforce certain federal laws under broad powers.

It's also unclear whether Bytedance is willing to sell TikTok in the uncertain circumstances.

Rupert Murdoch's British newspaper group could soon be facing a police investigation. All this comes after the prince -- Prince Harry settled his case against the tabloid publisher over allegations of phone hacking, surveillance and misuse of private information.

More now from CNN's max foster, reporting in from London.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

MAX FOSTER, CNN ROYAL CORRESPONDENT: After months of preparations, Prince Harry's lawyer today ended the case against Rupert Murdoch's U.K. tabloids. That was before the trial had even started, settling for a figure legal sources say runs into eight figures.

DAVID SHERBORNE, PRINCE HARRY'S LAWYER: News U.K. have admitted that "The Sun", the flagship title for Rupert Murdoch's U.K. media empire, has indeed engaged in illegal practices.

FOSTER: The civil case alleged "The Sun" and the now-shuttered "News of the World" newspapers had illegally obtained private information about the prince and used it to sell newspapers.

In court, NGN's lawyers apologized to the Duke of Sussex for the serious intrusion into his private life between 1996 and 2011 for unlawful activities carried out by its private investigators and for phone hacking.

Perhaps most notably, it apologized for its, quote, "extensive coverage and serious intrusion" into the private life of his mother, Princess Diana.

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The tabloid obsession with the princess was well known, with almost every step documented by photographers. She died in 1997, in a car crash whilst being chased by paparazzi in Paris.

But it wasn't just the royals who were alleged targets of the tabloids. Ordinary civilians say they were subject to claimed invasions of privacy, sometimes using the same very questionable tactics.

And in a criminal trial starting in 2013, one editor of the Murdoch- owned "News of the World" was found guilty of conspiracy to hack phones. He was sentenced to 18 months.

The real question now is what comes next?

[01:54:46]

EMMA JONES, HACKED OFF: This is here now for the police to investigate. You know, we've got a corporate culture of unlawful behavior. We've got an admission of that and the same people still working at that organization.

For what reason would they not have to now investigate those practices and say, you know, this happened. The evidence is almost laid bare, and they've gone to huge lengths to avoid being scrutinized in the court.

FOSTER: Prince Harry may have settled, but the legal battles may not be over for the tabloid press, with the prince calling for a new police investigation, pressure is mounting.

A spokesperson for "The Sun" said no staff at the newspaper were found culpable, and police have previously found no criminal case.

Max Foster, CNN -- London.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VAUSE: One of the survivors of the October 7th Hamas attack on the Nova Music Festival will represent Israel at the Eurovision song contest in Switzerland this year.

24-year-old Yuval Raphael was voted the winner of Rising Star, a competition in Israel. Fellow Israelis say her victory symbolizes a resilience.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NOAM NADLER, TEACHER: I believe this is an opportunity for her to Represent Israel and show the resilience of the survivors of the massacre at the Nova Festival.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(MUSIC)

VAUSE: Raphael performed the 1970s hit "Dancing Queen", as you just heard by Abba. Abba became famous after winning the Eurovision contest back in 1974. Well, a once in a decade event is happening right now in Australia. These are live images. Yes, live pictures of a corpse flower blooming in the Sydney botanic gardens.

The flower is named after the putrid stench which some believe smells like death. Still attracting pollinators like beetles and flies, as well as big crowds because each bloom only lasts 24 to 48 hours.

Thank you for watching. I'm John Vause.

Please stay with us. CNN NEWSROOM continues with our friend Kim Brunhuber after a very short break.

See you back here tomorrow.

[01:57:03]

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

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